The Promises, Perils, and Perks of Partnerships

Dennis McDowell, Director

Maurine F. Goodman, MA, MPH, Public Health Advisor

Cathy Shoemaker, M.Ed, Instructional Systems Specialist

Division of Professional Development and Evaluation
PHPPO, CDC

Objectives

- Describe the basic concepts of partnerships.
- Describe the promises, perils, and perks of forming partnerships.
- Within each component of the PHTN distance learning system model, identify the areas where forming partnerships could be advantageous.
- List three partnerships that could potentially help your distance learning system accomplish public health training goals.
- Explain the three steps in forming partnerships: prepare, negotiate, act.
- Make a plan for a potential partnership that could help you accomplish one of your distance learning system goals.

PARTNERSHIPS

What Are They Worth?

The Promises…

Why Collaborate in Public Health?

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In public health, we can't accomplish all we need to do without including others!

Public health distance learning is, by its very nature, a collective activity. You can't do it well if you do it alone.

Some More Good Reasons to Collaborate

- Achieve benefits neither party could achieve alone
- Enhance program support and sphere of influence
- Leverage resources to help each party deal with economic and performance pressures
- “None of us is as smart as all of us.”

Lasker 1997

Partnership Concepts

Public Health Collaborations

- Multi-organizational
- Multi-disciplinary
- Cross-sectoral (different kinds of businesses)

AND . . .

“Collaboration is damn tough.”

Lasker, 1997

Some Examples

- Health Departments & other gov't agencies
- Academic Institutions
- Professional Associations
- Voluntary Health Organizations
- Community Groups
- The Media
- Foundations
- PHTN
- Etc.

But a**ll collaborations are not equal!**

Collaborations can be structured in different ways to combine resources, skills, and synergies that result from the relationship

- Coalitions
- Contractual Agreements
- Advisory Bodies
- Intra-organizational platforms
- Partnerships

Lasker, 1997

Sometimes they call it a Partnership—
But it ain’t necessarily so . . .

So, what is this thing we call “Partnership”?

- A partnership is a type of collaboration.
- OK. . . so why does it matter what we call our collaborations?

Do all collaborations qualify as "Partnerships?"

- Disagreement about what is and isn't a partnership
- What most people agree about partnerships
- The "true meaning;" the "real thing; "the ideal"

Are these *real* partnerships?

- Relationships with clients, competitors and customers
- Buyer-seller relationships
- Principal-agent relationships
- Other contractual arrangements

Partnership as a type of collaboration

What does “Partnership” *really* mean?

(Defining the Ideal)

- What it used to mean
- What it means now
- Connotations associated with “partnerships”

Features of Partnerships

How can you tell when it's really a partnership?
Most people agree about this:

- Fair Division
- Symmetry in formulation
- Symmetry in function
- But "symmetry" does not necessarily mean "equality."

What's symmetrical in a real Partnership?

"Every partner bears some of the risk, pays some of the cost, and can claim part of the gain." Linder et al, 2001

- Shared resources
- Shared control
- Similar stake in outcomes
- Complementary motives among partners

The Perils…

Perils of Partnerships

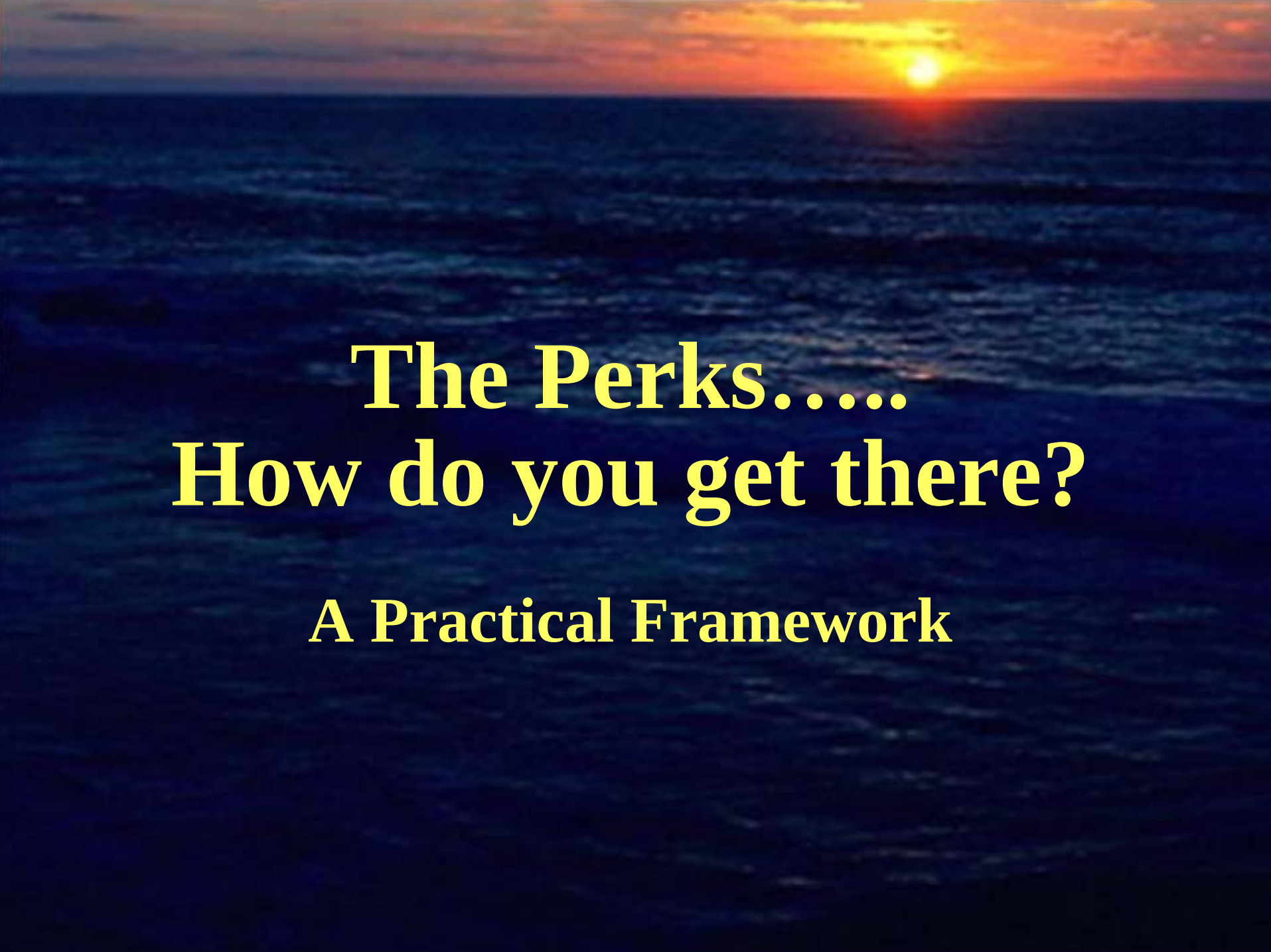
Some Barriers to a Successful Partnership

- Past negative history
- Organizations characterized by competition and local politics
- Conflicting goals among organizations
- Turf Issues
- Little communication or cooperation on issues pertaining to focal point
- Administrative impediments & obstacles
- Legal issues
- Not sharing the same vision

More Perils

(Sound familiar?)

- Stakeholders at odds; competitive
- Mistrust between various gov't agencies & hospitals
- Minimal cooperation between public health agencies and health care organizations
- If community is involved—community issues


The Perks…..
How do you get there?
A Practical Framework

Building Strong Partnerships for Distance Learning

Key to Successful Partnerships

Partnerships thrive when they are committed to a shared goal and sharing different resources

Building Strong Partnerships for Distance Learning

- Capitalizing on the Power
- Prepare
- Negotiate
- Act
- Keys to Success

Capitalizing on the Power

- Strategic in nature and intentional
- Generated out of a shared need
- Lead by a common vision
- Fueled by (true) two-way communication
- Characterized by complementary resource contributions
- Perpetuated by trust
- Energized by success

Prepare

- Identify your distance learning plan products/program/network ideas and goals
- Find out which groups are involved in distance learning and what they are doing
- Think about goals you might have in common with their groups
- Prepare a (priority) list of potential partners
- Brainstorm about how you could work together with each one
- Gain administrative support within your organization

Negotiate

- Set appointments to think about common goals
- Identify (and agree on) specific areas of collaboration
- Share ideas about what each have to offer
- Know your limitations and be realistic
- Communicate honestly
- Listen and be flexible
- Develop a partnership plan of action-who, what, when, how

Act

- Do what you commit to do
- (Talk and) meet as often as you need: “More is better”
- (Be a partner), don’t take without giving
- Share new ideas, information, and resources
- Give each other feedback and credit
- Celebrate your successes together
- Look for new opportunities

Shared Partnership Roles and Responsibilities

- Support the vision
- Provide leadership
- Adopt standards and guidelines
- Provide governance
- Coordinate activities
- Share resources

Nurturing the Partnership

"Much of the activity of partnering relates to defining and sustaining the fair division of responsibilities and burdens." Linder et al, 2001

Building and Sustaining Confidence and Trust

- Build on self-interests (PHTN) as well as organizational interests (Education Mission)
- Seek out influential backing and endorsements
- Don’t expect other partners to be like you (opposites attract; diversity; can’t all be quarterbacks; can’t all be clarinetists; can’t make symphonic music if you are)
- Be realistic
- Pay attention to the process
- Ensure adequate infrastructure support
- Be up-front about competition and control issues
- Be a good listener
- Give it time

Lasker, 1997

The Test of a True Partnership

- Evidence of attainment of otherwise unattainable goal
- Evidence of symmetry
- Evidence of mutually beneficial results
- Evidence of shared credit
- Evidence of of fairness

References

http://www.partnershiptool.net/

Pulling It All Together

Partnership Plan

Final Thoughts…..